1: Beals E-5 (1940-1941) 1946

NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

407

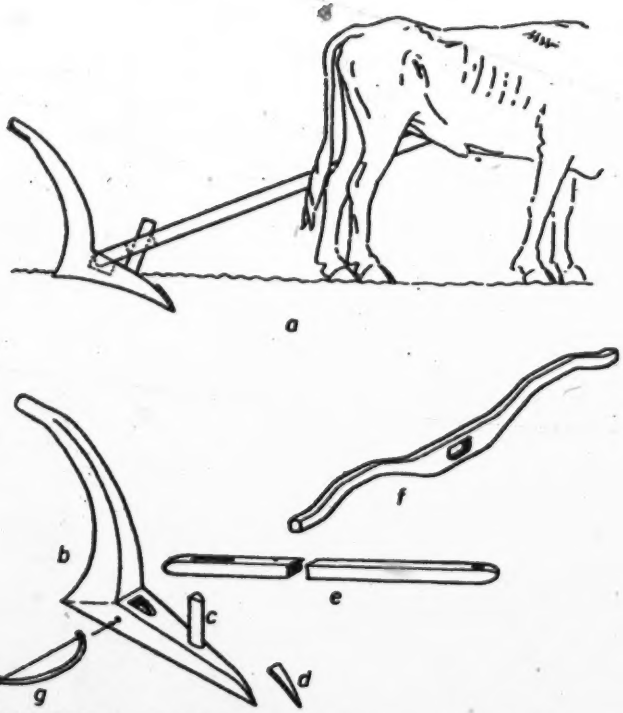

FIGURE 3.—The Cherán plow. *a*, Plow in use with oxen (see also pl. 4, upper left). *b*, Main frame, made from a single piece of wood. *c*, Peg over which the tongue fits. *d*, Steel plowshare fastened on the point of the main frame. *e*, Tongue which goes over peg (*c*), while the end fits in a socket on the main frame. *f*, yoke; the tongue (*e*) passes through the opening in the yoke and is held by a tapered peg (not shown). *g*, Bow used on the plow in planting to spread the dirt into the already planted furrows; the bow is inserted into the indicated hole.

[p. 22 c]

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

243 good crop, although complete failure is rare. A little wheat is grown in town lots, where it seems to do better than in fields.

[462] Wheat is harvested by hand with a sickle. Men do most of the work, but women and children help sometimes. The plants are cut as close to the ground as possible, tied in sheaves, and transported to the houses. One, and in [407] 1940 two, small threshing machine is used in Cherán, but the bulk of the wheat is threshed by hand with flails. The flail used is a slender pole about 8 feet long. To this are fastened two or three heavy iron wires some 10 to 12 feet long. Threshing is done on any hard clean-swept ground when the weather is dry. One stone threshing floor exists at the end of Zaragoza Street. The owner is usually given a liter or so of wheat for its use, although it is built on public property. The straw is carefully saved, whether threshing is done by hand or by machine. Both men and women winnow [462] the wheat on windy days (pl. 3, center). The grain is stored in sacks.

252 Some wheat is consumed locally. It is ground on the metate and made into bread or 439 atole. The bulk of the wheat is sold, however, to four mills at Purépero, Carapan, Tarataro, Jacona, or as far away as Morelia (since the highway has been built). Wheat is, indeed, probably the major cash export crop of Cherán. Prices and costs are discussed later.

MINOR CROPS

Barley.—Some barley is sown in June and harvested about October. Techniques of planting and harvesting are similar to those for wheat. Barley is fed to animals or sold outside the town. It is stored in sacks. Most barley is planted to restore failing cornlands, and the quantity is not important nor is it regarded as an intrinsically valuable crop.

Oats.—Although the growing of oats is reported, no farmer was found who had planted the grain. The quantity must be unimportant.

Beans.—The soil of Cherán is said not to be 244 good for beans; possibly the climate is also unsatisfactory. Whatever the reason, Cherán grows few beans and many are imported from the Lake Pátzcuaro region.

The principal bean grown is a small pinkish type called *criolla*. White, orange-yellow,

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.147a]

256 arrangement guarantees an adequate number of customers each day a mill is operating.

256 The miller must have some mechanical knowledge as well as capital and business ability.

402 Most of the mills are driven by an old automobile engine converted to operate on gas produced by a charcoal burner, usually made from an old oil drum. A belt drive transmits power and reduces the speed. Usually the owner (or manager in some cases) supervises the motor and the gas burner and an employee or member of the family feeds the maize into the mill and collects the charge, 1 centavo a kilo. In one case a woman occupied this post, but most of the mill operators are men.

Except for a few very poor families, everyone in Cherán now patronizes the mills. Each mill serves from about 330 to 360 customers a day.

Wheat threshing.—One wood-burning steam-
● 407 driven threshing machine has operated in Cherán for several years. The machine is stationary (although it could be moved, it is too cumbersome to do so), and the customers bring their wheat to the machine. Two tenders, who feed the wheat into the machine, and a water carrier are required besides the operator. Firewood is purchased. Exclusive of interest on the investment and repairs, the operator nets about 25 pesos a day above operating expenses.

In 1940 a smaller gasoline-driven thresher, which could be moved from house to house, was said to have made considerable inroads on the trade. However, as the bulk of the Cherán wheat is still threshed by hand, there seemed to be ample business for both threshing machines.

Painters and plasterers.—This is a rare occu-
338 pation followed by two or three men on a part-time basis. Only a minority of the houses of adobe or stone are plastered, and few of them are painted. The pay is fairly good, but the best worker probably does not put in more than 90 days' work a year. Brushes and stencils are used in painting.

Masons.—As the house owner normally pro-
333 vides all materials, the mason sells only his services. His equipment is a trowel, hammer, a board frame for holding mud mortar, a shovel for mixing mortar, an ax to cut poles for

243 *Threshing machine:*
407 *Equipment:*
433 Woodburning steam-driven threshing machine. Cost unknown, but probably several thousand pesos.
434

Charges for wheat threshing (a *carga*)	$2.50
Capacity daily	12 *cargas*
Income daily	$30.00

Operating expenses (daily):	
Wood	$2.00
Hired labor	2.00
Water carrier	1.00
Total	$5.00

Operating season (June 20 to Oct. 25, period worked in 1940 estimated):	Days
June	8
July	25
August	25
September	20
October	15
Total	93

Total business (1,116 *cargas*, estimated, at $2.50 a *carga*)	$2,790
Net profit annually before deducing repairs, wages for owner, interest and depreciation, approximately	$2,365

Comment: Probably the threshing machine has the largest peso volume of business of any enterprise in Cherán, although one of the *nixtamal* mills probably is a close second. The threshing machine also represents the greatest capital investment except for some individual investments in real estate. High repair costs probably reduce the true net profit considerably, while depreciation in this case cannot be ignored. Add to this the time and skill required of the owner, and it is probable that this is not the most profitable enterprise in town even though it be the largest. Certainly, other families of farmers or combination farmers and storekeepers show more outward signs of prosperity.

402 *Nixtamal mills:*

Cost of equipment	$300.00–$1200.00
Costs daily:	
Gasoline and oil for gas engines	2.00
Charcoal for producer gas equipped engines	1.20
Labor, 1 man	.80–1.00
Gross income at 1 centavo per kilo of maize ground (daily)	13.00–15.00
Net income (daily)	10.00–12.00

Comment: Mills work only half time; i.e., by agreement only half the mills operate any one day, so net income should be halved. Even so, this gives a sizable income, but probably the life of the equipment is short. Cost of repairs and the replacement of grinding stones